

AFRICA SCIENCE LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME: SECOND ROUND OF SUCCESS

As the challenges we face in the world, and especially in Africa, become more complex, a different style of science leadership is required. The Africa Science Leadership Programme (ASLP) was launched in June 2015 to address this, and recently it concluded its second round of interactions with fellows from across Africa. The programme is part of the Future Africa initiative of the University of Pretoria (UP). The programme is in partnership with the Global Young Academy, KnowInnovation and Robert Bosch Stiftung. It serves early-career researchers in basic and applied science, engineering, social sciences, arts and the humanities, using a highly interactive approach to training, application of skills to leadership projects, peer support, and mentorship.



Professor Bernard Slippers, who leads the Future Africa and ASLP initiatives at UP said: “It is a feather in the cap of the University of Pretoria that it has so successfully supported the establishment of this programme, in collaboration with leading global institutions. The programme addresses a key need for African science, but also globally. We are extremely

excited about the fellows we have already been able to engage with through ASLP, and the potential that this network of science leaders hold.”

The eight-day ASLP workshop commenced on 11 April and focused on the new group of 22 fellows for the first six days of the intensive programme. The process involved an approach that cycled between theory, application and reflection. Participants were challenged to work collaboratively to design initiatives that advance a new paradigm for their science. Day six welcomed the 2015 cohort of fellows and there was a brief mix of the two groups leading to a gala event in the evening. The gala event showcased the fellows and their visions for African science development as inspired by the programme. The remainder of the programme followed up with the inaugural cohort, reflecting on the year of learning and their project progress.



Prof. Derick de Jongh, the Director of the Albert Luthuli Centre for Responsible Leadership at UP joined the workshop on day one as a provocateur. Prof. de Jongh shared his thoughts on Leadership, which induced rich discussions amongst the fellows. Day two of the workshop welcomed three provocateurs from UP; Prof. Robin Crewe - Director of the Centre for the Advancement of Scholarship, Dr. Willem Fourie - Ethicist at the Albert Luthuli Centre for Responsible Leadership and Prof. Tinyiko Maluleke - Professor in African Spirituality and Culture in the Faculty of Theology. The speakers shared their experiences and thoughts on the different facets of leadership followed by questions and discussions with the fellows. Anina Mumm of ScienceLink joined both cohorts and facilitated learning on science communication

and how to connect with audiences as a leader. Prof. Stella Nkomo, joined the first 2015 cohort of fellows on day two of their programme shared her view on the characteristics of a true scholar. She challenged the fellows to find their authentic scholarly voice as an essential part of their development as research leaders.



The leadership programme identifies early-career academics who have demonstrated leadership potential and an interest in developing key leadership skill. It supports them to apply the acquired skills to projects that are relevant to the development of their academic career and its impact. It also

creates a network of early-career academic leaders that spans disciplinary boundaries, and advances a curriculum for academic leadership development, which can be utilised by others.

The workshop covered elements of collective leadership, creative and systems thinking, development of effective networks, stakeholder engagement for change, maximising the efficiency and impact of collaborative efforts, advanced dialogue and communication skills, effective problem solving and decision making, and much more.

The programme aims to, within Africa, continue the formation of a community of like-minded researchers who possess qualities that will contribute towards solving the complex challenges that face Africa. Everyone involved, from the organisers, to the facilitators, provocateurs and fellows have been inspired by the programme. As one of the fellows said in their anonymous feedback:

“The ASLP initiative gave me an unexpected new vision of what leadership is, and our collective roles in the development of African science. It also connected me to excellent young scientists from various disciplines and from across Africa with whom I can work towards these goals. Much can be achieved from this!”